

Pounding Mill  
Indian Gap, N.C.  
C.S.M.N.P.

HABS No. N.C. 4

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. N.C.  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey

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POUNDING MILL  
Indian Gap, North Carolina  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Owner: United States Government, National Park Service

Date of Erection: 1925

Architect:

Builder: Jim Bungarner

Present Condition: Good

Materials of Construction: Wood

Additional Data: See following pages.

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POUNDING MILL  
INDIAN GAP, NORTH CAROLINA  
GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

The following history of the pounding mill now located at Timber Top Lodge, near Indian Gap, North Carolina, was written by Mr. H.C. Wilburn, of Taynesville, North Carolina, at my request.

"Dear Mr. Crossman:

It was in the fall of 1927, I think in the month of October, that I first saw the Jim Bumgarner pounding mill. It was located near the residence of Mr. Bumgarner, on Georges Branch of Indian Creek, Swain County, N.C. I was en route, with a surveying party, to the Bryson Place on Deep Creek."

"As I approached, and was about to pass the Bumgarner cabin, my attention was drawn by a dull "thud" and splashing of water, in the branch to my right, some 40 or 50 feet. As I stopped and was observing the mill in operation, Mr. Bumgarner came out from the cabin and talked with me about the mill and its operation."

"I observed that it made approximately three strokes each minute. That is, the water box filled, overbalanced the pestle and refilled, ready for another cycle in about 20 seconds. Mr. Bumgarner said that he had constructed the mill himself without pattern or definite instruction from any one. He had heard of the pounding mill, and its use from older people in the mountains; and decided to "make" one for his own use."

"In regard to the efficiency of the mill, Mr. Bumgarner said that he generally put something like 2 gallons of corn into the mortar early in the forenoon, and went about his day's work, leaving the mill to run without further attention. By late afternoon about one half of the corn would be "pounded" to a degree of fineness suitable for making bread. The remainder would be coarse grist, and might be used as "hominy" fed to chicks or to the family cow."

"In August, 1935, I visited the home of Mr. Bumgarner, then living near Bryson City, N.C. He was not at home, but I talked with his mother, a lady of about 75 years age. She told me that in her early days, the pounding mill was in fairly common use in the mountainous regions of Swain County; but that she did not recall having seen one herself until her son, Jim, "made" his and put it in operation at his home on Georges Branch, about the year 1925."

"Sometime shortly after I observed the old mill in operation at Bumgarner's in 1927, I came in contact with Mr. W.J. Damtoft, then forester and property man for the Champion Fibre Company of Canton, N.C., on whose land the Bumgarner home was located. Mr. Damtoft immediately became interested in the mill, and suggested to Mr. Reuben Robinson, President of Champion Fibre Company, the idea of preserving it."

"I understood from Mr. Damtoft that Mr. Robinson paid the sum of \$10.00 to Bumgarner, a consideration for the mill and had it dismantled, removed and re-installed at "Timber Top" in the Smokies, which was Mr. Robinson's Summer lodge, until the property was taken over for park purposes several years ago."

"Yours very truly,

"/s/ H.C. Wilburn"

A number of years ago pounding mills were in fairly common use by the Cherokee Indians whose reservation borders the Great Smoky Mountains National Park on a portion of its southern boundary. According to the wife of Chief Standing Deer, her father, Running Fox, built many pounding mills for his neighbors. A Mr. Bradley who lives on Tow String Creek near Smokemont, North Carolina, says that as a boy pounding mills were so common up and down the creek that they would waken him in the morning with their pounding. The original site of the pounding mill now at Indian Gap was just outside the Indian Reservation.

*Charles S. Crossman*  
Charles S. Crossman.